The Dewan opened the Assembly with the following

ADDRESS.

"GENTLEMEN OF THE SRI MULAM POPULAR ASSEMBLY,

Another year has gone by, and I have been once again commanded by His Highness the Maha Raja to invite you to the capital to hear first hand from you the needs of those whom you represent, and to explain to you the policies and the activities of the Government. To you, this session is important as marking the closing year of the second decade of your eventful life; and to us all, the year we have assembled to review is eventful in that it chronicles the conferment, by His Majesty the King Emperor, on His Highness the Maha Raja, our beloved Ruler, of an Honorary Colonelcy in the Indian Army; and it is also the year in which, for the first time, Her Highness the Senior Rani has been blessed with a child. It is further the year in which political relations with this State have been assumed by the Government of India direct and the political officer at the Court of His Highness the Maha Raja has been raised to the status of an Agent to the Governor-General.

2. Meeting as we do for the first time after the assumption by the Government of India of direct political relationship with our State, it may not be amiss to note the very important position that she occupies among Indian States. Although, in point of area, Travancore is smaller than seventeen other such States, she is the third largest in point of population and the fourth largest in point of revenue. In the matter of education and political advancement, she holds the foremost place among Indian States, the percentage of the literacy of her population being the highest in all India except Burma, and her Legislative Council being the embodiment of the largest measure of constitutional reform inaugurated in any Indian State down to the present day. She is still largely an agricultural country; but her industrial awakening, as revealed by the last census, is greater than that of the adjoining British Indian Districts; and in her water, mineral and forest resources she possesses, in an abundant measure, all the natural agents so eminently conducive to her industrial advancement.

3. Copies of the Administration Report for the year 1098 M. E. have been placed in your hands, from which you will know in detail how the administration of the several departments of the State was conducted during the year.

ECONOMIC POSITION.

4. Land. Land is the mainstay of the people of Travancore, as it is of the rest of India, as many as 53·9 per cent of them, according to the last census, being supported by agriculture. The prosperity of the land-holder is therefore of paramount consideration to the State, and you will note that the several reforms effected in the administration of the Land Revenue Department in recent years have had the three-fold object of (1) increasing the facilities for the assignment of lands for cultivation, consistently with the prevention of speculation therein; (2) conserving, in the communal interest, all *poramboke* and other Government lands which ought not, under any circumstances, to be thrown open for registry; and (3) affording help to the cultivator in increasing production and improving his lot.

5. Extension of Cultivation. The Land Assignment Regulation, III of 1097, was, as you know, enacted for preventing speculation; and the Revised Puduval Rules, which have been issued under Section 7 of that Regulation, have, as their main object, the provision of equal opportunities to all for acquiring lands. The salient features of these rules are that, while all unoccupied lands available for registry would be cut up into conveniently small blocks and sold by auction, lands already occupied *bona fide* and containing valuable improvements would be assigned to the occupants themselves without auction. In the case of the depressed classes composed of Pulayas, Parayas, Kuravas, Vedas and hillmen, and comprising about 8·7 per cent. of the aggregate population of the State, as also in the case of the landless poor of all communities, the rules provide for the assignment of lands on concessional terms without auction, subject to a maximum limit of three acres per family,

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while a similar provision has been made for the assignment of lands by the side of backwaters and on the sea-coast as house-sites to fishermen, subject to a maximum of 10 cents. per family. To give practical effect to the concessions allowed to the depressed classes, instructions have been issued for as much of the area of available lands in each locality as may be found necessary for those classes, with reference to their population, being ear-marked for assignment to them and for lists of such lands being prominently hung up in taluk and village offices. An extent of 18,986 acres has been so ear-marked up to the end of Tulam, 1099, but only 1,028 acres have been so far registered during the last three years. The Government cannot but repeat that the progress achieved by the officers of the Land Revenue Department in this direction is far from satisfactory, though they are aware that to some extent the classes concerned are also to blame for failing to apply for lands which are made available for assignment and for persisting in their demand for lands which cannot be assigned. Government expect the Land Revenue Commissioner and the other responsible officers of his department to see that the above concessions reach as many members of these poor landless people as possible, within the shortest time and in the most effective manner.

6. It may, at this stage, be legitimately asked how far the Land Assignment Regulation and the rules thereunder have served to achieve the objects with which they were promulgated. Judged by the extent of the lands brought under registry during 1097 and 1098, it may, at the first blush, appear that the results of these measures have not been far-reaching; but a closer examination will show that this impression is incorrect. It has, in the first place, to be remembered that, since the issue of the Revised Puduval Rules, the system of registry of large areas of land in favour of single individuals has been completely stopped, except in the rare instances in which the Government have been obliged to fulfil certain promises already made; and it has been their aim so far to concentrate the attention of their Land Revenue and Land Records officers mainly on the regularisation of the existing unrecognised occupations, either on lands classed as unassessed waste or on *porambokes* like large rivers and backwaters, with the result that the listing, survey and inspection of such occupations have been practically completed and about one-half of them registered in the names of the occupants. I have no doubt that you will concede that this delimitation and recognition of private rights in land effected under the Revised Puduval and Land Conservancy Rules is a measure of great benefit to the occupants and the public alike. You will observe that, while the areas registered in 1095 and 1096 were 27,795 and 14,087 acres bringing in a non-recurring income of Rs. 5,51,456 and of Rs. 3,98,682 respectively in the shape of *taravila* and *tadivila*, the corresponding figures for 1097 and 1098 were only 10,547 and 7,659 acres, bringing in, nevertheless, a comparatively larger non-recurring income of Rs. 3,67,378 and of Rs. 3,91,307 respectively. The reason for this, as I have already explained, is that the registries in the two latter years related to small extents of land occupied *bona fide* by small cultivators and rendered valuable by their genuine efforts. The values commanded by such lands were naturally higher than those paid for large blocks taken up for speculation, even after making due allowance for the value of the occupants' improvements. It is true that, side by side with the regularisation of existing occupations, a large extent of fresh waste lands, considered likely to be sought after by *bona fide* cultivators, was split up into small blocks and surveyed by the Puduval Survey Parties and that a good portion of these lands remains unsold. The main reason for the tardiness of the people in applying for these newly surveyed lands appears to be the persistent stringency of the money market, while the higher *tadivila* rates which were prevalent for a major portion of the period under consideration might have also contributed to this result. These rates have since been substantially reduced. The measured pace at which land assignment has, of late, been moving need, however, be no matter for regret, since land is, after all, the greatest of national assets, and should, on no account, be suffered to find its way into hands that cannot or will not make the best and promptest use of it. The deplorable fact that nothing more than the deprivation of tree-growth has been attempted on many large areas of land registered in the past has evoked protests from the people's representatives, both in this Assembly and elsewhere, some of

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whom have gone the length of suggesting that assignments of lands should henceforth be made conditional on their cultivation within a specified time. I may assure you that the Government will not hesitate to adopt this suggestion if they are convinced that there is a pressing need for it.

7. Puduval Survey. The Puduval Survey Staff, created in the middle of 1096 to facilitate the disposal of applications for *puduval* lands, was charged with the detailed survey of minor circuit blocks in the twelve taluks of the State in which large areas are available for registry. This staff worked till the close of 1097 and completed the detailed survey of 122 square miles. As, by that date, it was found that the extent surveyed was ample enough to meet all present demand for fresh *puduvals*, this staff was considerably reduced in 1098 and the reduced staff directed to attend to the completion of the field work in the minor circuits, the survey of which had already been commenced, and to the correction of records. This temporary staff has been still further reduced in 1099, and the small staff remaining has been directed to close the balance of work under original survey and correction of records in the minor circuits already taken up.

8. Kodayar Area. The extension of wet cultivation within the area commanded by the Kodayar channels in South Travancore has, as you are aware, claimed the attention of the Government; and mainly as a result of the labours of the special officer appointed for the purpose, an extent of 490 acres was added to the wet area there in 1097 and 629 acres in 1098. The total extent of dry lands converted into wet within the commanded area up to the end of 1098 is 17,053 acres, leaving a balance of 8,508 acres still available for conversion. It will be noted that the lands so converted from 1096 are exempt from the payment of water-cess for a period of two years, and that only the reduced cess of Rs. 4 per acre is demanded from them during the third year. Action is being taken by the Revenue and the Public Works Departments in regard to the schemes submitted by the special officer for the opening of fresh distributary channels in the upper reaches of the commanded area and for the utilisation of the surplus and seepage water for the tail-end lands.

Government are glad to note that most of the block irrigation boards in this area have already been formed and that a good many of them have begun to function. It is hoped that the Central Board for the entire area will be constituted without further delay.

9. Disafforestation. In addition to the four taluk committees formed for the purpose of recommending areas suitable for paddy cultivation being thrown open from reserved forests, referred to in my Address last year, four more committees have since been constituted for the taluks of Pattanamtitta, Todupuzha, Muvattupuzha and Kunnatnad. Orders have already issued on the reports received from the committees for Peermade, Devicolam and Pattanapuram, whereby areas to the extent of about 790, 1,150 and 200 acres respectively have been thrown open for registry in those taluks. The reports of the other committees are awaited.

10. Land Colonisation. In paragraph 10 of my last year's Address, I referred to a scheme of land colonisation which was under the contemplation of Government as a means of meeting, in some measure, the problem of middle class unemployment in this country. The draft rules relating to the scheme have been published for criticism and will soon engage the final attention of the Government. This scheme has been the subject of a certain amount of adverse criticism both in the press and elsewhere. Some of these criticisms are valuable, containing as they do suggestions which would remove certain defects in the draft scheme and enhance its utility; and Government are grateful for such criticism. They do not claim perfection for their draft scheme and would endeavour to improve it as far as possible before it emerges in its final form. The remaining criticisms, however, which are pitched in a different key, aim at dismissing the scheme as chimerical and impracticable; and to those critics my answer is that the scheme is not so jejune or valueless as they would wish to make out. It may not go far; but should it be availed of by the people for whose benefit it is intended, it is sure to go some way to solve the acute

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